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# St Francis Catholic Primary School

## Religious Education Policy

### Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Governing Body on an annual basis unless circumstances require policy update in the interim.

Approved by:

Date: 19<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Reviewed on:

Reviewed on:

Reviewed on:

Reviewed on:

## School Mission Statement

### **'I am a sign of God's love'**

At St. Francis we love, learn and grow in the footsteps of Jesus and are active signs of God's love through praying, respecting and serving others.

## INTRODUCTION

The Religious Education provided in a Catholic school cannot be confined to teaching / learning specifically devoted to RE. We seek to ensure that the message and spirit of the Gospel permeates all aspects of school life. Through teaching, example, worship and shared Christian values, we are helping to further with the family and the parish the work of the awakening and fostering a living and personal faith in our pupils. It is to this end that we have agreed our Mission Statement.

## AIMS

The Aims of Religious Education in St. Francis School will include the following:

- To lead the children to a living and active faith by helping them to become aware of God's presence in their lives, to listen to Him and to respond to His invitation to enter into a personal relationship with Him through prayer.
- To develop a well formed conscience allowing the individual to make sound moral judgments in the light of personal commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ.
- In a changing world we want to help pupils to develop personal, spiritual and moral values, respect and tolerance for others and an understanding of interdependence between groups and nations.
- To promote an intelligent appreciation and understanding of religious questions in general and a sympathetic acquaintance with other religious beliefs and practices.
- To involve parents in the spiritual development of their child.

## OBJECTIVES

In order that these aims can be translated into workable objectives the following curriculum is followed.

We use the Curriculum Strategy for Religious Education in Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Birmingham – Learning and Growing as the People of God, together with supplementary materials.

The aim of the scheme is

- To help children to become aware of and reflect on their experiences of living in the world with others. **(Life in Christ)**
- To reveal to children some aspects of God's plan for our salvation. **(Revelation)**
- To help them to respond to God's love in their lives. **(Life in Christ)**
- To help them listen to and respond to God. **(Celebration)**
- To help them to see God's offer of salvation in the sacraments and respond to it. **(Celebration)**
- To show that every human person is made in the image of God and is called to reflect God's people. **(Church)**
- To help the children be aware that the church is worldwide and multi-cultural, that love and service of God and others are universal human values and signs of God's Spirit in the world. **(Church)**

## TIME

Ten percent contact time must be given to the teaching of Religious Education. This does not include assembly, school Masses or Hymn Practice.

## RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

These are followed in order that purpose and meaning may be experienced in prayer and worship as well as ensuring that the cherished religious traditions of the Catholic Church are upheld. These practices take the form of:

### DAILY PRAYER

At St. Francis all staff recognise the important role played by prayer as means of expressing and fostering faith.

Children are taught daily prayers and also various prayers and responses of the Mass as appropriate to their age and stage of development (based on Diocesan guidelines: 'Teach Us How to Pray'). Each classroom has an RE display and children pray together with their teacher at the beginning, before lunch, after lunch and at the end of the day. Child led worship takes place weekly in all classes. Music is used to help create a quiet reflective atmosphere. Prayer altars in every classroom act as a focus for their prayers.

The teachers will:

- Create an environment where prayer can be developed and experienced.
- Create a special and visible prayer space which either reflects the current topic or the liturgical season to support children in their communication with God.
- Help the children discover a variety of methods of prayer, both formal and informal, private and communal.
- Help the children to develop their understanding of reverence, intercession and reflection as the children progress up the school.
- Provide the children with the experience of a variety of structured prayer services suitably adapted for the age of the children.
- Encourage the children to share their own prayers and thoughts giving them time to meditate and think. This makes a good contribution to the spiritual and moral growth of the pupils.
- Lead quiet and thoughtful prayer times.

### PRAYER AND LITURGY

At St. Francis all pupils will take part in a daily acts of prayer and liturgy, either in the hall or in their classrooms. This should last between 10 and 30 minutes.

The whole school joins together each week for assembly. Monday's whole school assembly is led by all members of staff and focuses on the Sunday Gospel. Key Stages One and Two join together for a weekly assembly to focus on either the Gospel, Catholic Social Teaching, Saints Feast days, World events, World Faith events e.g. Diwali, Eid etc. or current issues e.g. bullying.

Children are given opportunities throughout the year to share in a form of worship with the Parish Priest. This may take the form of a class or whole school Mass, a prayer service etc.

### CELEBRATION OF MASS

As the Mass is the centre of liturgical worship in the Catholic Church, the school believes it has an established place within the life of the school.

Children are involved in the preparation and celebration of the liturgy i.e. the readings, singing, prayer.

Whole school Masses (including KS1 and Early Years Foundation Stage) are held at least once every half term and take place in Church at significant times during the school year, (beginning and end of school term / year, Advent, Lent, Leavers Mass etc.) Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 1 join together for their class Mass which takes place on a weekly rota basis in Church and parents and parishioners are invited to attend.

The school holds an annual May Procession as well as many other religious celebrations such as Harvest Festivals, Lent and Advent.

We will ensure the mode of celebrations is appropriately adapted to the needs of the children, within the limits allowed (consult Directory of Children's masses).

Parents and parishioners are invited to all celebrations in school which reflect both their vital role in fostering their child's faith and our desire to maintain a good partnership with parents and the parish.

#### PARENTS AND PARISH LINKS

Many opportunities arise to strengthen the partnership between the school, parents and parish;

- Whole school Masses are advertised in the Parish bulletins.
- Times for Masses during the Christmas/Easter season are advertised on the School Newsletter and school website (which includes the Parish Bulletin).
- Parents and Parish invited to attend annual celebrations: e.g. beginning and end of a school year, Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Harvest, Advent, Christmas, Ash Wednesday etc.
- Parents are invited to attend their child's class Mass at Church.
- Commitment Mass held for children in Year 3 and Year 6, their parents and family and the Parish to mark the start of their Sacramental preparation.
- Children's service of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation.
- Parish invited to pray for children receiving the Sacraments through displays in Church.
- Parish invited to attend school production throughout the year: e.g. Nativity, Easter Production, and Summer Production.
- Proactive partnership with health visitors, school nurse, education welfare officer, social services, police and other emergency services to support pupils and their families.

#### HEALTH AND SAFETY

Teachers and children are aware of the risk and correct procedure for lighting candles.

#### HYMN PRACTICE

This takes place in preparation for:

- School Masses and assemblies
- Feast days
- Carol services
- Introduction / practice of new hymns and sung parts of the New Mass e.g. Gloria, Great Amen, Gospel Acclamation etc.

#### SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Children are prepared for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Eucharist in Year 3. The Diocesan 'Learning and Growing as People of God' programme is followed. Preparation for these Sacraments involves meetings and Masses throughout the year. These are attended by parents, teachers and the parish priest. During preparation for these sacraments, parents are seen as a vital part of the teaching and are asked to take part alongside their children.

Children are prepared for the Sacrament of Confirmation in Year 6. Parents and families are invited to attend a meeting. The Year 6 Diocesan 'Learning and Growing as People of God' Programme is followed with parents encouraged to work with their children.

Throughout the preparation great emphasis is placed on the children being responsible for the undertaking and commitment involved, to come to know the Holy Spirit better and to relate to Him as a real person who is alive in the life of the Church and in their own lives.

Years 3 and 6 are matched up in pairs as 'Faith Buddies' and join together for RE lessons to support each other in their sacramental preparation. They attend a Mass of Commitment together during the autumn term.

## SCHOOL ORGANISATION / PLANNING

Religious Education is taught throughout the school and we will aim to use a variety of styles to deliver the diocesan scheme to meet the needs of the children.

In line with the recommendation of the Diocese and the wishes of the governors, we aim to have Catholic teachers presenting the scheme. We will therefore strive to accommodate this, wherever possible. However, it will be the responsibility of the Head Teacher and the RE Co-ordinator to assist any non-Catholic teachers in their teaching of Religious Education.

The nursery, while funded by Walsall LA, is part of the school. Nursery children are taught in the same Christian atmosphere and join in Masses, services and assemblies.

The Diocesan curriculum strategy 'Learning and Growing as People of God' is the basis of all RE teachers' planning. This provides continuity and progression in each year group. A range of resources have been purchased to support the curriculum strategy.

All teaching staff plan for and teach a multi-faith scheme of work according to their Year group. This allows the children to develop their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other faiths in the world, as well as exploring similarities and differences between and within religion. Through these lessons, they are given opportunities to reflect on the benefits and challenges of living in a multi-cultural and diverse society.

## CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

When a thematic approach is adopted, RE is effectively brought into other areas of the curriculum such as English, Curriculum (History, Geography, Art, DT, Computing, Music), Science etc. This will ensure that RE is encountered across the curriculum. Furthermore teachers will provide, where appropriate, opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their ICT Skills through RE.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The RE Co-ordinator will work in close consultation with the Headteacher, KS Co-ordinators, EYFS Co-ordinator and the Parish Priest.

Ideally the teacher responsible for Religious Education will be a source of inspiration to the whole school, leading by personal example with enthusiasm.

The RE Co-ordinator will:

- be familiar with each year group of 'Learning and Growing as the People of God' and any supplementary schemes
- be available to individual teachers for guidance and support and keep staff informed of current thinking in RE and any new materials / publications
- distribute relevant assessment proformas
- attend courses and encourage other members of staff to do so. Information gained from such courses should be shared with other staff
- arrange any inset training to meet needs of staff
- monitor the progress of the diocesan RE programme and assessment in line with the second edition of "Levels of Attainment in Religious Education" (Bishop's Conference 2007) throughout the school through evaluating planning, assessments and where possible classroom observations
- organise rotas for Masses in consultation with the Parish Priest and rotas for assemblies and liturgical displays
- be responsible for cataloguing materials and the management of the RE budget
- provide information and support Sacramental preparation and meetings with parents
- establish and work closely with a 'Charity Committee' to choose, plan fundraising and raise awareness of charities and those in need for all people and faiths.
- Monitor and evaluate prayer corners and RE related activities e.g. Rosary clubs, prayer bags with children and look to improve such activities based on feedback given.
- liaise with other local Catholic Primary School to moderate work to ensure that assessment is in line with local schools with similar cohort
- attend cluster meetings organised by the RE department and act upon relevant advice and ideas shared
- organise whole school Masses and Sunday Masses in consultation with the Parish Priest

The Class teacher:

- is responsible for daily collective acts of worship within the classroom
- is responsible for promoting home/school links via the prayer bag system and for updating the prayer bags to make them relevant to unit of work
- is responsible for seeking the opportunity to assess the children's knowledge and understanding
- should seek to attend courses and inform the RE Co-ordinator if they feel further development is needed
- responsible for delivering the programme of study 'Learning and Growing as the People of God' and any supplementary schemes to the class

#### ASSESSMENT / RECORDING / REPORTING

Owing to its nature, Religious Education is difficult to evaluate because we cannot objectively judge a child's relationship with God with regard to their faith.

Each class teacher has hard copies of the relevant assessment proforma for each unit of 'Learning and Growing as the People of God'. These are also saved onto the shared school network. In line with Diocesan guidance, one of the strands of the Curriculum Strategy is selected as a focus for assessment and monitoring each academic year (Focus Strand: The Sacraments- 2022-23). Teachers complete end of unit assessments based on a variety of evidence e.g. pupil work; pupil interviews; informal activities. Three focus children are chosen and are assessed against the Age Related Standards for each unit that is taught.

- Each class will be assessed at the end of units selected by the R.E. Co-ordinator for assessment and each focus child will be assessed against the Age Related Standards after each taught unit
- Completed teacher assessment sheets and copies of work are given to the RE Co-ordinator
- Pupil questionnaires will be carried out by the RE Co-ordinator
- Base-line assessment will be carried out when children enter Nursery and Reception by EYFS staff
- The RE Co-ordinator will liaise with other local Catholic Primary School to moderate work to ensure that assessment is in line with local schools with similar cohorts

Observation of children's behaviour plays a major part in the evaluation procedure, e.g. changes of moral behaviour, good or bad are monitored. Conduct within and outside school is encouraged to be of a caring, helpful, selfless nature. Conduct in Church is encouraged to be one of dignity and respect. In the end of year reports to parents, teachers will specify and comment on the child's knowledge and understanding of the faith but moral behaviour will also be included in the general comment section.

Each child has an RE exercise book which is discussed and marked regularly by the class teacher. R.E. written work should be marked in accordance with the marking policy but with a focus on the religious nature of work. Special emphasis must be made on the spelling of key words 'God', 'Jesus' ensuring the correct use of capital letters.

Recording of children's work takes many forms – pictorial, written, wall display, assemblies etc. Where possible RE tasks will be linked to literacy tasks to ensure that children are completing a variety of tasks within RE.

Each child's progress in Religious Education is reported to parents in the form of the annual report to parents.

#### RESOURCES AND DISPLAY

Religious Education resources are controlled and provided by the RE Co-ordinator in consultation with colleagues. All staff are invited to make suggestions for purchases.

Assembly books, other religious reference books and visual aids are stored centrally in the library and in the RE cupboard. Age appropriate Bibles, religious artefacts, statues and any relevant reference, prayer and story books have been distributed throughout the Key Stages.

All resources are reviewed annually to ensure replacements are made when necessary.

In order to highlight the importance of Religious Education and the Catholic Ethos of the school, displays of a religious nature should be evident in each classroom throughout the year. An R.E. display and Prayer focus area forms an essential part of the classroom. This

area should have appropriate liturgical colour, a crucifix and a candle. Statues, artefacts and posters should be prominently displayed wherever possible and changed on a regular basis.

#### EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES / SPECIAL NEEDS

The fair and equal treatment of all individuals is central to our school mission statement. All children are given equal access to the Religious Education curriculum developing their knowledge and understanding. A variety of teaching and learning strategies are employed to try to meet all children's different needs.

Lessons and activities from the Strategy should be planned and differentiated sufficiently to allow children to work at their own Religious Education ability level, including the most able.

**This policy will be reviewed every two years.**